

PATTERNS IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG ADOLESCENTS IN SOUTHERN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The 'out-of-school' activity, patterns of 1740 young adolescents between the age group of 12 to 14 years were studied, to find out which activities they participate in and for how much time. An inventory pertaining to the activity participation was developed by the investigator. Also, particulars regarding demographic variables and reasons for adolescents' participation were collected. It was found that age and gender significantly influenced the levels of participation in 'out-of-school' activities, while there was no association between levels of participation and ordinal positions, school types and mothers' employment status. Over-scheduled Participants were identified, based on the extent of participation using percentiles and the results indicated that, more than 40% of students were over-scheduled. The most common reasons for participation included 'Interest', 'to improve talents', 'like learning new things', and (for boys) 'friends'.

KEYWORDS: Adolescence; out-of-School Activities & Over-Scheduling

Original Article

Received: Sep 10, 2017; **Accepted:** Sep 30, 2017; **Published:** Oct 28, 2017; **Paper Id.:** IJESRDEC20173

INTRODUCTION

The world is becoming increasingly competitive, dynamic and multifaceted (Parentree-editors, 2010), has led to the development of children's abilities, through structured activities and classes in addition to regular or formal education. Though these structured activities are taught in most schools as a part of the formal education system, extra coaching is thought to be required for mastering the task. Therefore, it is learnt outside the school hours as well. These out-of-school activities include both extracurricular– those that fall outside the realm of the normal curriculum of school education and co-curricular – those that usually complement the regular curriculum (e.g. tuitions).

Various studies indicate that the participation in 'out-of-school' activities tend to vary with adolescents' gender, family income level, and mother's employment status (among other factors). With regard to gender, Mota&Esculcas (2002) found that, significantly more girls than boys belonged to the sedentary group and low activity group. This is supported by AlHaifi et al. (2013), where it was found that, nearly half (44.6 %) of the boys and three-quarters (76 %) of the girls did not meet the recommended daily physical activity levels.

It was not just the extent of participation, which was affected by gender- there were differences, in the kinds of activities pursued also. For instance, fourth grade girls spent lesser time than boys in free play or computer games and more time in reading, extracurricular activities, routines, and adult-chosen activities (Newman, Bidjerano, Özdog̃ru, Kao, B  y  k& Johnson, 2007). Gender differences were less pronounced on school days, when

time is fairly structured, but become more consistent with traditional gender schema on the weekend, when time use is more discretionary (Hilbrecht, 2010). Findlay, Garner & Kohen (2010) suggest that, boys have a relatively stable pattern of unorganized physical activity, throughout childhood and adolescence, while they found participation declines in adolescence for some girls.

While children from low-income families attended significantly fewer sessions of structured out-of-school activities than those from wealthier families, the total physical activity showed no relationship between parental income and the mean activity level of the children. Those from poorer families made less use of facilities, for structured activity out-of-school, but they nevertheless recorded the same overall level of activity as others. What they lack in opportunity, they appear to make up in the form of unstructured exercise (Voss, Hosking, Metcalf, Jeffery & Wilkin, 2008).

A positive relationship exists between maternal employment and participation in lessons after school, for the adolescent children of married women. Maternal employment is also positively related to sports participation, for the adolescent children of unmarried mothers (Lopoo, 2007).

Although, plenty of research has been conducted to study adolescent activity patterns, there is a gap in the literature concerning Indian adolescent activity participation. This paper aimed to investigate whether the trends observed elsewhere hold for South Indian adolescent activity patterns and also, to identify the over-scheduled adolescents with regard to the effects of their age, gender, type of school, ordinal position and mother's working status on their level of participation.

METHODS

Participants

The study was conducted in the South Indian city of Chennai on a total of 1820 young adolescents, belonging to the 6th, 7th and 8th standards during the period of January 2011 to April 2011. The participants were between the age group of 12 to 14 years, with the mean age of 13 years, out of which 80 of them (36 females and 44 males) were not included as a part of the sample, due to incomplete answers. Hence, the final sample consisted of 1740 young adolescents, with 649 male and 1091 female, young adolescents with the mean age of 13.04 years.

Procedure

Multistage sampling technique was used to select young adolescents from different types of schools, managed by state government, government-aided and privately managed, which follow different syllabuses like CBSE, state board and matriculation in the metropolitan city of Chennai. In the final sample, 1326 young adolescents were participants in out-of-school activities and the remaining 414 young adolescents were non-participants.

Before the administration of the questionnaires, a written consent about young adolescents' willingness to participate in the study was obtained, by having them sign on a form, which explained the purpose of the study. Some of the young adolescents who were not interested dropped out, while those agreed included both participating and non-participating young adolescents, in out-of-school activities.

Measure

Pilot Survey

Initially, a pilot survey was conducted, in order to ascertain if, children from different schools learn activities

during their out-of-school hours, on school days and weekends. For the purpose of the pilot survey, a 'weekly activity schedule' was prepared, to collect information about the type of activities the students participated in, either before or after school hours, on weekdays and weekends. The pilot survey indicated that, activity participation is prevalent among the school children, during their out-of-school hours; the investigator went ahead, to develop a questionnaire to assess the extent of activity involvement of young adolescents.

Activity Involvement Inventory

An 'Activity Involvement Inventory', developed by the investigator helped in assessing the extent of participation in out-of-school activities, among the young adolescents. It asks for complete details, specific to each and every activity, which included the number of days they attended, whether it was weekday or weekend, duration per session, and for how many years/months the activity was being learnt, the reasons for participation in activities, and whether the activities were for competitions.

Identifying Over-scheduled Adolescents

One of the primary objectives of the researcher was identification of over-scheduled young adolescents. Norms in terms of percentiles have been found, based on the number of hours spent in a day, for out-of-school activities. For the selected sample, the hours of participation in a day, ranged from half an hour to four hours and fifty minutes. Based on the percentiles, levels of participation have been identified. Three levels mainly minimal, moderate and over-scheduled have been identified and the range of hours of participation was categorized as below two hours, between two hours to four hours and above four hours, respectively. Based on the hours of participation per day, by the young adolescents, the following classifications were derived by the researcher: *minimal* participation according to the investigator, included young adolescents who participated below two hours per day in out-of-school activities, *moderate* participation included those who participated between two and four hours in out-of-school activities and *over-scheduled* participation included those young adolescents, who participated above four hours per day in out-of-school activities.

RESULTS

The descriptive analyses of particulars about out-of-school activities of the sample, based on the status of participation in out-of-school activities are presented in Tables 1-6.

Table 1: Number of out-of-school Activities Participated by the Young Adolescents

Sl. No	Categories of Activities	Male (N = 552)		Female (N = 774)	
		N	Ranking of Activities	N	Ranking of Activities
1	Games	481	1	520	1
2	Tuition	388	2	458	2
3	Arts / Crafts	226	5	418	3
4	Brain Gym	248	4	284	5
5	Music	183	6	327	4
6	Language	298	3	164	7
7	Dance	85	7	243	6

Note: Number of responses exceeds the total number of sample due to multiple participation

Results from Table 1 indicate that the ranking of activities in which the young adolescents participated. It is evident that, regardless of the gender, adolescents were found to be engaged in games more than any other activity, whereas dance was found to be the least participated activity, among them.

Table 2: Reasons for out-of-school Activity Participation

Reason for Participation	Male(N = 552)		Female(N = 774)	
	N	Rank	N	Rank
Interest	464	1	660	1
To improve talent	429	2	624	2
Enjoyment	415	4	575	4
Like learning new things	400	5	605	3
Your talent is identified	339	6	494	5
Helps with school work	314	8	449	7
Friends	420	3	355	9
Parents' Choice	336	7	488	6
Selected by the school	160	11	211	10
Like meeting new people	284	9	370	8
Don't Know	063	13	093	13
I am Forced to learn	108	12	105	12
I am bored at home	177	10	184	11

Note: Number of responses exceeds the total number of sample due to participation in multiple activities.

Results from Table 2 lists out the reasons for out-of-school activity of adolescents, with ranks. Apparently, the adolescents were found to choose out-of-school activities, based on their interest, followed by the motive to improve their talent and for enjoyment purpose. On the other hand, only few were forced to learn, while others opted these activities due to boredom.

Table 3: Weekday-Weekend Participation in Different Categories of out-of-school Activities

Categories of Activities	Gender	N	Days of Participation					
			Weekday		Weekend		Both	
			N	%	N	%	N	%
Games	Male	481	93	19.3	90	18.7	298	62.0
	Female	520	186	35.8	106	20.4	228	43.8
Music	Male	183	80	43.7	47	25.7	56	30.6
	Female	327	130	39.8	84	25.7	113	34.6
Dance	Male	085	19	22.4	22	51.8	44	25.9
	Female	243	66	27.2	104	42.8	73	30.0
Arts/Crafts	Male	226	60	26.5	77	34.1	89	39.4
	Female	417	146	35.0	125	30.0	146	35.0
Brain Gym	Male	248	69	27.8	69	27.8	110	44.3
	Female	287	95	33.1	83	28.9	109	37.9
Language	Male	324	132	40.7	40	12.3	152	46.9
	Female	458	131	50.4	54	11.8	173	37.8
Tuition	Male	412	159	38.6	16	3.9	237	57.5
	Female	502	223	44.5	20	4.0	259	51.6

Note: Number of responses exceeds the total number of sample due to multiple participation

Table 3 elucidates the level of participation, with respect to different types of activities in which the adolescents participated. Depending upon the activity, the participation of both boys and girls were found to vary, throughout the weekdays and weekend.

Table 4: Duration of Participation in Different Types of out-of-school Activities

Categories of Activities	Duration of Participation	Male(N = 552)			Female(N = 774)		
		N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Games	Min/Day	481	107.26	44.282	520	89.06	42.552
	In Months		33.42	20.699		29.26	20.523

	Days/Week		4.69	2.256		3.68	2.177
Music	Min/Day	183	73.85	28.227	327	76.26	28.445
	In Months		26.67	22.284		25.74	20.781
	Days/Week		3.10	1.905		3.18	1.854
Dance	Min/Day	85	78.88	28.923	243	81.69	27.285
	In Months		24.94	22.116		29.54	23.426
	Days/Week		3.60	2.200		2.85	1.651
Arts / Crafts	Min/Day	226	76.54	38.422	418	78.79	39.051
	In Months		23.15	17.803		25.43	21.361
	Days/Week		3.35	2.137		3.17	2.090
Brain Gym	Min/Day	248	58.61	17.378	287	54.23	15.960
	In Months		23.59	17.587		25.52	21.073
	Days/Week		3.19	2.198		2.94	1.933
Language	Min/Day	324	50.37	44.454	458	51.47	42.266
	In Months		32.18	29.260		30.61	28.809
	Days/Week		4.11	2.355		3.85	2.250
Tuition	Min/Day	412	75.87	62.101	502	59.94	60.219
	In Months		28.46	23.804		25.37	24.059
	Days/Week		4.97	2.028		4.67	2.131

Note: Number of responses exceeds the total number of sample, due to multiple participation.

Table 4 lists the duration of participation, with respect to different types of activities, in which the adolescents participated. Depending upon the activity, the duration of participation was found to vary evidently, among both the boys and girls.

Table 5: Total Duration of all the out-of-school Activities Participated by the Selected Young Adolescents

Total Duration	Male(N=552)		Female(N=774)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Number of days per week	4.08	2.92	3.25	3.015
All Activities (Days/Week)	6.61	1.11	6.30	1.537
All Activities (Minutes/Day)	250.24	148.50	230.20	156.740

Table 5 shows the total duration of all the out-of-school activities, participated by the selected young adolescents as a summary to the previous Table 4.

As explained in the methodology, the levels of participation in out-of-school activities were identified as minimal (below two hours), moderate (between two to four hours) and over-scheduled (above four hours) participation. An analysis of the levels of participation of the 1326 adolescents, who participated in 'out-of-school' activities indicates that, adolescents who participated in minimal, moderate and over-scheduled were 178 (13.42%), 579 (43.66%) and 569 (42.91%), respectively. Hence, the association between levels of participation and the demographic variables are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Association of Demographic Variables on Levels of Participation of Young Adolescents in out-of-school Activities

Demographic Variables	Levels of Participation						Chi-Square (χ^2)	'p' Value
	Minimal		Moderate		Over Scheduled			
	N(178)	%(13.42)	N(579)	%(43.66)	N(569)	%(42.9)		
(i) Age								
12 years	50	28.1	166	28.7	162	28.5	11.100*	.025
13 years	109	61.2	294	50.8	313	55.0		
14 years	19	10.7	119	20.6	94	16.5		
(ii) Gender								
Male	46	25.8	227	39.2	279	49.0	32.493***	.000
Female	132	74.2	352	60.8	290	51.0		

(iii) Ordinal Position								
Only child	23	12.9	73	12.6	61	10.7	11.494NS	.074
Eldest	88	49.4	233	40.2	244	42.9		
Middle	13	7.3	89	15.4	91	16.0		
Youngest	54	30.3	184	31.8	173	30.4		
(iv) School Types								
Govt. Aided	56	29.8	174	30.1	185	32.5	9.054NS	.060
Private	107	60.1	304	52.5	311	54.7		
Government	18	10.1	101	17.4	73	12.8		
(v)Mother's Occupation								
Non-working	23	9.1	413	71.3	430	75.6	4.072NS	.131
Working	55	30.9	166	28.7	139	24.4		

Note: * $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$; NS - Not Significant

The results from Table 6 indicates that, there is an association between age and the levels of participation ($\chi^2 = 11.100$, $p = .25$) and between the gender and levels of participation ($\chi^2 = 32.493$, $p = .000$).

It is observed that, young adolescents with siblings tend to participate more in out-of-school activities than single children. With reference to the type of school, young adolescents from the private schools participated at greater levels, than young adolescents from the government aided and government managed schools. Taking into consideration the mothers' employment status; it is seen that, young adolescents with unemployed mothers participate at greater levels in out-of-school activities than young adolescents with employed mothers. The level of participation for the above mentioned demographic variables (ordinal position, type of school and mothers' employment status) are all observed to be moderate and over-scheduled.

Therefore, it is found that age and gender significantly influence the levels of participation in out-of-school activities. Findings of White & Gager (2007); and Mitzel (1982) speak in support of the present results; it states that, girls have higher participation rates than boys. However, there is no association between levels of participation and ordinal positions, school types and mothers' employment status. Findings by Rees, Lopez, Averett & Argys (2007) contradict the present results, by demonstrating a strong link between ordinal positions and participation in school sports and other extracurricular activities. Further, research by Stearns & Glennie (2010), also contradict the present results, as they state that school size significantly influences the number and type of activities available. However, studies by Nandwana, Pareek & Upadhyay (2010); and Clements (2004) contradicted the present results by stating that, highly significant difference was found between employed and non-employed mothers' children in their afterschool hours.

DISCUSSIONS

It is evident in the present study that participation in out-of-school activities is primary in the development phase of young adolescents. It is notable that almost three fourths (77%) of the selected sample (1740 young adolescents) were participating in out-of-school activities and the remaining one fourth (23%) were not participating. This result of non-participation is little less than the statistics reported by the Society for Research in Child Development (2006), which indicated that 40% of children (Ages 5 to 18 years) are not engaged in any activities, during out-of-school hours.

Parent Income and Employment Status

Most of the parents (66%) of the participating group are qualified with a college degree and holding a comfortable occupational status than the remaining sample. This indicates that educated parents try to bring up 'smart kids'

due to their own exposure to the opportunities available to them. In addition, better occupational position gives economic affordability to spend for out-of-school activities. Similar findings have been reported by Findlay, Garner & Kohen (2010), who emphasized the role of educational level of parents and income, influencing the participation in out-of-school activities. Chinn (2007); Hofferth & Jankuniene (2000) stressed that; high levels of education and high income of parents are important determinants of participation, in beneficial activities. This explanation is similar to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Development, in which the exosystem indirectly interacts in the child's development.

In the Indian scenario, women taking up careers and joining work force is quite less when compared to other developed countries. This could be one of the reasons for almost three fourths of the selected young adolescents to have their mothers as housewives. The present study indicates that more number of non-working mothers send their children to out-of-school activities than the working mothers. This indication of the study is in contradiction with the study by Clements (2004) who revealed that non-working mothers provide less structured activities. Jago (2006) found that, dual earner parents enrolled their children in structured activities and Mahoney (2006) reports that, working mothers are compelled to compensate their time with kids, by enrolling their kids in out-of-school activities.

Types of Activities

It is worth the mention that sports is the most attended activity irrespective of the gender (75%), as out-of-school activities. This could be because parents believe that sports involvement is not only considered to be good for the physique but also for mental alertness. For a child, whether sports are a game or a play, it is fun. Also, many involve in sports as an activity as they do not get the opportunity for natural play and fun due to space constrained apartment living. Parents do encourage sports among young adolescents, due to career opportunity through sports. Participation in physical activity throughout the week including week days and weekends was found to be common among young adolescents. This is supported by Mota & Esculcas (2002) who indicated that, organized sports activity was an important component of total weekly activity, for both male and female participants.

The second most common activity attended by the selected young adolescents was tuitions - an academic activity, during out of school hours. Major portion of the evening hours is spent in tuitions, by 63% of the young adolescents. Originally, Nandwana, Pareek & Upadhyay (2010) commented that, tuitions were meant for students, who were lagging behind in the syllabus due to sickness, change of school, change of educational boards or other factors. Now, because parents are busy and feel that they do not have the time to fill the gap between school and homework, they expect the gap to be bridged by tuitions. As Raina (1993) pointed out, in the class room, teachers are intent on covering the syllabus, often disregarding the comprehension level of students. Tuitions have become necessary partly because academic success has such an important role in determining a child's future; it has come to be a critical measure of self-worth for young Indians (Varma, 1998). This over emphasis on tuitions and academics has made Cooper, Robinson & Patall (2006) comment that may be home work enhances learning and is needed for building good work habits.

India with its famous traditional and cultural significance for dance and music, it is surprising to note that the participation in dance and music is not very popular among the selected young adolescents. While the participation in the seven activities was ranked, it is seen that dance has taken the seventh place (last) and music has the fifth place. This could be because the intricacies of learning these arts need a lot of perseverance and patience to continue. Perhaps, today's young adolescents live in fast paced world who are always hurried with little time to appreciate tradition. Moreover, the creeping in of western culture might have made Indian tradition out-of-fashion to the present generation.

Participation Duration

In the present study, young adolescents were found to be attending activities for three to four days a week and for a duration of about 2 years. According to Wainscott (2006), such intense participation was a significant determinant of being depressed or not. It is observed in the present study that the total duration of participation by the selected sample in out-of-school activities is 250 min/day. This is much less than the hours of participation mentioned by Voicu (1984) that, weekly workload ranged from 48 hours 54 min for 5th graders, to 57 hours for the 8th graders. The excess participation was attributed mainly to out-of-school activities.

Extent of Participation

The levels of participation in out-of-school activities are identified as minimum, moderate and over-scheduled, which were derived from the duration of participation spent in activities. Zaff, Moore, Papillo & Willams (2003) have noted that, the duration of participation is the main link between activity involvement and youth development. Marsh (1992); Marsh & Kleitman (2002); Mahoney, Harris & Eccles (2006) have pointed out that, the indicators of youth development were initially positive for low and moderate levels of participation, but the youth development actually leveled off and became negative for high levels of involvement. Cooper, Valentine, Nye & Lindsay (1999) also indicate that at the highest levels of participation, the achievement scores dropped dramatically. Coleman (1961); Marsh (1992); Marsh & Kleitman (2002); Gilbert (1999); Noonan (2001), have also raised similar concern about over-scheduled adolescents and their academic activities.

Similarly, minimal, moderate and over-scheduled levels of participation did not demonstrate any association with the perceived social support from all the three sources namely family, friends and significant other. These findings are dissimilar to that of Huebner & Mancini (2003); Pierce, Hamm & Vandell (1999), who concluded that after-school extracurricular activities were predicted by the staff positivity, parent endorsement of activities, ethnicity and friend endorsement of activities.

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